

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 MC-02 CG-00 EB-11 TRSE-00 L-03

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R 111400Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 409

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC

CNO

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 112

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, CE

SUBJ: PURCHASE OF SHIP FOR SRI LANKA NAVY

REF: COLOMBO 2775, NOV 6, 1973; STATE 251792

1. DCM CONVEYED TENTATIVE OFFER OF COAST GUARD PATROL BOAT (WPB) "CAPE" CLASS, AS SET FORTH STATE 251792, TO MDFA DIRECTOR OF WEST AFFAIRS BALASUBRAMANIAM JAN 9. AT OUTSET OF PRESENTATION DCM REAFFIRMED THAT USG HAD BEEN UNABLE LOCATE SUITABLE SHIP FITTING SPECIFICATIONS OF GSL'S AUG 3 AIDE-MEMOIRE AND ADDED THAT WE HAD, HOWEVER, HEARD INFORMALLY THAT GSL MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN SMALLER SHIP IF APPROPRIATE ONE COULD BE FOUND.

2. MDFA DIRECTOR SMILED AND SAID US OFFER OF WPB WAS "PLEASANT SURPRISE". HE COMMENTED THAT \$350,000 PRICE TAG WAS LOWER THAN ANYTHING ELSE GSL HAD BEEN CONSIDERING AND THAT MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER SRI LANKA NAVY THOUGHT PATROL CRAFT COULD BE USED FOR TRAINING, AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE IN SLN'S SEARCH FOR NEW
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SHIP.

3. IN RESPONSE INDIRECT QUESTION, BALASUBRAMANIAM SAID SOVIET SHIP OFFER WAS "DISAPPEARING", IN THE SENSE THAT, WHILE OFFER STILL STANDS, GSL HAD TAKEN A CLOSE LOOK AT ITS ECONOMIC SITUATION AND HAD DECIDED IT COULD NOT AFFORD SUCH LARGE OUTLAY. GSL HAD LEARNED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SOVIET SHIP WOULD COST RS 2 MILLION A YEAR TO OPERATE.

4. BALASUBRAMANIAM SAID HE WOULD TRANSMIT GENERAL INFORMATION ON TENTATIVE US SHIP OFFER TO APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING SRI LANKA NAVY, AND WOULD LET US HAVE REACTION AS SOON AS AVAILABLE.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE BALASUBRAMANIAN'S PERSONAL RECEPTIVITY TO US OFFER, ULTIMATE GSL DECISION WILL DEPEND ON MANY FACTORS, INCLUDING FOREIGN EXCHANGE POSITION, COMMODORE GOONASEKERA'S STRONG DESIRE FOR BLUE-WATER VESSEL, AND GSL'S GENERAL POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS.

VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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